

On the House Floor, Slaughter Opposes Legislation That Would Give Unprecedented Authority To DHS Over Lands Within 100 Miles of the Border

WASHINGTON – Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY-28), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee, today went to the House floor to defend Western New York from proposed legislation that would give the Department of Homeland Security unprecedented authority over lands within 100 miles of an international border.

In a speech delivered on the House floor, Slaughter criticized legislation that would create an "operational control zone" for the Department of Homeland Security. Within this zone a litany of environmental laws would be waived and the US Customs and Border Patrol would be empowered to take control over historic landmarks that fall anywhere within the 100 mile zone, such as the Theodore Roosevelt National Historic Site.

She also strongly defended the sovereignty of Native American lands, such as the Tuscarora Reservation in Tonawanda. Under the proposed legislation, the federal government would be allowed to violate the sovereignty of sacred Native American lands if they fell within 100 miles of the US border. For example, the Department of Homeland Security would be allowed to build a road across tribal lands without approval from Native American populations.

In part, Slaughter said:

"My entire district would fall under the newly created 'operational control zone.' As a result, the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol could take control over historic landmarks such as the Theodore Roosevelt National Historic Site.

"Meanwhile the sacred, historic and sovereign lands of the Tuscarora Indian Nation would also be opened to federal agents. Such an extreme federal overreach would violate the sovereignty

of the Tuscarora Indian Nation, and many other tribes around the country whose land falls within this zone."

Her full statement is below.

[For video of her speech, please click here.](#)

The damaging provision is a part of the Conservation and Economic Growth Act, H.R. 2578 which received a hearing in the Rules Committee last night.

[For video of Slaughter's remarks in the yesterday's committee meeting, please click here.](#)

Slaughter's Statement on the House Floor

M. Speaker,

The bill before us represents yet another wasted opportunity by the Majority. Today's legislation is composed of 14 separate bills, several of which are even bipartisan. Regrettably, these worthy proposals will not be signed into law, because the Majority has packaged them with other proposals that endanger our environment and public health.

Several of the controversial provisions before us are based on Democratic proposals. Unfortunately, the Majority took these Democratic bills and rewrote them in such an extreme way that they can no longer receive bipartisan support.

Two provisions in particular illustrate the Majority's extreme and partisan approach.

First, title 3 would unnecessarily change a longstanding agreement and endanger the biologically sensitive Alaskan wilderness. This provision would open up our nation's largest national forest to logging and allow rare old-growth forest to be clear-cut and sold for private gain.

Second, in the most extreme proposal before us, title 14 would impose a so-called "operational control zone" over almost 1 million square miles of American land.

On federal land within this zone, the Department of Homeland Security would be allowed to ignore 36 environmental laws, and federal border agents would be allowed to operate with few limits on their power. My friend from Utah has put forward an amendment to pare the 36 waived laws down to 16, but that is still 16 too many.

Title 14 proposes a solution to a problem that doesn't exist. Proponents claim that environmental protections prevent the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol from stopping illegal immigration. However, sworn testimony by both Border Patrol officials and federal land agency officials contradict this claim. In fact, the Department of Homeland Security opposes this legislation.

My entire district would fall under the newly created "operational control zone". As a result, the US Customs and Border Patrol could take control over historic landmarks such as the Theodore Roosevelt National Historic Site.

Meanwhile the sacred, historic and sovereign lands of the Tuscarora Indian Nation would also be opened to federal agents. Such an extreme federal overreach would violate the sovereignty of the Tuscarora Indian Nation, and many other tribes around the country whose land falls within this zone.

In a letter to the leaders of the House, the United South and Eastern Tribes wrote of the danger of this provision. They wrote, "Many Indian tribes have lands and sacred places located near

U.S. international borders, and we believe that the sovereignty and cultural integrity of our member tribes and others is unnecessarily put in jeopardy by the sweeping approach [in this bill]."

Federal cooperation, not federal overreach, is a proven and prudent way to protect our borders. A recent GAO report confirmed what we learned in sworn testimony: every time federal cooperation between our border patrol officials and our land management officials was requested, it was given. The only time conflicts remained between environmental laws and border enforcement was when Border Patrol officials didn't bother to ask the Department of the Interior nor the USDA for cooperation.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the Majority was poised to violate the germaneness rule when they combined 14 separate bills into the 1 bill before us today. However, the Rules Committee gave itself a germaneness waiver, despite repeatedly denying such waivers for Democratic proposals throughout the year. Once again, when the Majority wants to break the rules, they find a way. But when Democrats ask for a waiver for one of our proposals, all of a sudden the Majority swears up and down that the Rules of the House must never be waived.

I urge my colleagues to oppose today's extreme and partisan legislation, and stand up against the federal overreach contained within this bill.

I reserve the balance of my time.